

REMARKS

There are now pending in this application claims 1-6 and 8-12, of which claim 1 is the sole independent claim. Claim 7 has been cancelled without prejudice or waiver of its subject matter. No claims have been added.

In view of the above amendments and the following remarks, favorable reconsideration and allowance of the above application is respectfully sought.

Applicants submit herewith replacement drawings for Figures 9 and 10, each designating the figure as prior art in accordance with the Examiner's requirement. Acceptance of those replacement sheets and withdrawal of the objections to Figures 9 and 10 are respectfully sought.

The drawings also stood objected to on grounds that they do not show every feature of the invention as specified in the claims, and particularly as specified in claim 8. In response, Applicants have rewritten claim 8 to more clearly recite that the hitting portion has a shutter which is retractable in the sheet feeding direction and it is the shutter that is moved to a position in which the shutter does not hinder movement of the sheet during the sheet feeding operation of the sheet feeding portion. With reference to the drawings, shutter 4 does move and perform the functions as recited in claim 8. Accordingly, withdrawal of the objection to the drawings is now respectfully sought.

The specification is objected to on grounds that it did not provide proper antecedent basis for the subject matter of claim 11. Applicants respectfully traverse this objection. More specifically, Applicants respectfully submit that claim 11 is fully supported at least by the description at page 22, line 24 through page 23, line 18. That description provides

that a user may use an operation condition setting portion 14 to establish a setting in which only an aligning operation for originals is performed and an original conveyance is not performed after the completion of the alignment.

Claims 7, 8 and 11 have also been objected to on grounds that they contain grammatical errors. As the Examiner will appreciate, claim 7 has been cancelled and claims 8 and 11 have been amended in a manner believed to address those informalities. Withdrawal of the objection is therefore respectfully sought.

Claims 2, 8, and 11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicant regards as the invention.

Claim 2 has been amended to recite vibrating members in place of a single vibrating member and thus the rejection is believed to have been addressed and overcome. As noted previously, claim 8 has been amended to clarify that it is the shutter which is retractable and with this amendment it is respectfully submitted that the basis of the rejection of claim 8 under § 112 has been addressed. Lastly, claim 11 has been discussed above in light of its description in the specification and it is respectfully submitted that claim 11 meets the requirements of § 112 and that the rejection should be withdrawn.

Independent claim 1 is directed to a sheet feeding apparatus which has a sheet supporting stand for supporting a bundle of sheets in an erect posture, a sheet feeding portion which feeds the bundle of sheets, a pressure portion which thrusts the bundle of sheets toward the sheet feeding portion during feeding by the feeding portion, an aligning portion which vibrates the bundle of sheets upwards and downwards and moves the bundle of sheets in a feeding

direction while supporting the bundle of sheets at at least two rotations, and a hitting portion arranged to be hit against by leading edges of the bundles of sheets moved by the aligning portion. The invention as recited in claim 1 is now characterized in that the pressure portion is moved to a position in which the pressure portion does not hinder an aligning operation of the aligning portion during the aligning operation of the aligning portion. This latter feature of claim 1 was incorporated therein from claim 7.

Independent claim 1, as well as claims 2-7 and 12, were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b), as being anticipated by Nahar et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,295,645). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

As touched on above, the present invention is characterized in its provision of a pressure portion which thrusts a bundle of sheets supported in an erect posture toward a sheet feeding portion to feed that bundle of sheets, and an aligning portion which moves the bundle of sheets to a hitting portion while vibrating the bundle of sheets upward and downward in at least two locations so as to align the bundle of the sheets. This is going on when the pressure portion is retracted to a position in which the pressure portion does not hinder an aligning operation of the aligning portion. As a result of this combination of features, it is possible to avoid a faulty alignment of sheet bundles that is caused by the force of the pressure portion that thrusts the bundle of sheets toward the sheet feeding portion.

Nahar et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,295,645) is directed to a hopper for feeding documents automatically into a sorter and provides for a roller extending through a slot along a wall is used to urge the ends of the documents downward and forward towards feeder nudger belts which feed them to the sorter and spring bias flag pushed against one end of the stack of

documents to urge them in the same direction against the feeder nudger belts. Nahar et al. does feature the vibration of a bundle of sheets vertically by rollers R4,R6, as well as the urging of the bundle of sheets against the conveying belt 46 by a flag F. However, the flag F is always urged against the conveying belt 46 by the force of a spring. More specifically, the flag F always urges the bundle of sheets during an aligning operation of the bundle of sheets and there is no disclosure or suggestion of the pressure portion being moved to a position in which the pressure portion does not hinder an aligning operation. As such, Nahar et al. does not disclose or even suggest the invention as recited in independent claim 1.

Applicants have reviewed the remaining art of record and respectfully submit that none of those references meet the shortcomings of Nahar et al. Accordingly, whether taken individually or in combination, the art of record does not anticipate or render obvious the invention of claim 1.

The remaining claims in the above application, namely claims 2-6 and 8-12, are dependent claims which depend either directly or indirectly from claim 1 and are therefore patentable over the art of record for reasons noted above with respect to claim 1. In addition, each recite features of the invention still further distinguishing it from the applied art. Favorable and independent consideration thereof is respectfully sought.

Applicants respectfully submit that all outstanding matters in the above application have been addressed and that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and early passage to issue of the above application are respectfully sought.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below listed address.

Respectfully submitted,



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